APPLICATION

FOR

UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN;

BE IT KNOWN THAT I, **THOMAS E. PLACE**, a citizen of the United States, have invented new and useful improvements in a

BELT-WORN ARTICLE CARRIER APPARATUS

of which the following is a specification:

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BELT-WORN ARTICLE CARRIER APPARATUS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Cross-Reference to Related Application

This application claims priority based upon my copending Provisional Application Serial No. 60/476,212, filed June 6, 2003.

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to article-carrying belts, and, more particularly, to an article-carrying belt that is especially adapted for carrying articles used by a hunter.

Description of the Prior Art

Deer hunters often use antlers to attract deer. The antlers are knocked together, and the sound of clashing antlers often has an attractive effect on deer. When the hunter uses the antlers, the hunter grasps one antler in one hand and another antler in the other hand and knocks the two antlers together. When the antlers are not in use, the antlers are carried and/or stored in a manner that leaves the hands of the hunter free.

Throughout the years, a number of innovations have been developed relating to the use of antlers by hunters, and the following U. S. patents are representative of some of those innovations: 4,610,641 and 5,555,664. More

specifically, U. S. Patent No. 4,610,641 discloses a pair of hand-held antlers used for attracting deer and elk. The two antlers are tethered together. No provision is made for carrying the antlers when the antlers are not in use. In this respect, it would be desirable if an apparatus were provided that can carries antlers when they are not in use.

U. S. Patent No. 5,555,664 discloses a tree-supported storage device from which antlers hang downward when not in use. The two antlers shown in U. S. Patent No. 5,555,664 are hanging next to each other. As a result, in a breeze the two antlers can knock against each other and make a clashing sound when such a sound is not wanted. In this respect, it would be desirable for a device to be provided so that a hunter could carry antlers on one's person when they are not in use so the antlers do not knock against each other when a sound is not wanted and that the hunter could rapidly access the antlers when use of the antlers is intended.

The following patents may be of interest: 4,033,488, 6,135,333, and 6,223,854. U. S. Patent No. 4,033,488 discloses a harness article carrier that is used for carrying a camera. U. S. Patent No. 6,135,333 discloses a game carrying hunting pack which is used for carrying a deer head that has antlers thereon. U. S. Patent No. 6,223,854 discloses a safety and support garment for use in a tree stand. Ropes are attached to a belt worn by a person, and the ropes are used to attach the belt and person to a tree.

Still other features would be desirable in a belt-worn article carrier apparatus. Often a hunter climbs a tree to reach a tree stand and to sit therein for hunting. In this respect, it would be desirable to provide a belt-worn article carrier apparatus which enables a hunter to climb a tree in order to sit in a tree stand without having antlers knock together.

Often a hunter carries grunt calls or game calls on a lanyard suspended from the hunter's neck. The game calls can knock together and make noise as the lanyard swings on the hunter's neck. To avoid noise created by game calls hanging on a lanyard, it would be desirable if a belt-worn article carrier apparatus were provided which permits game calls to be supported so that the game calls do not knock together when they are not in use.

When game calls are on a lanyard, the game calls often interfere with a hunter properly aiming a bow and arrow. To avoid this problem, it would be desirable if a belt-worn article carrier apparatus were provided that prevents game calls from interfering with a hunter properly aiming a bow and arrow.

Thus, while the foregoing body of prior art indicates it to be well known to use belt-worn article carriers, the prior art described above does not teach or suggest a belt-worn article carrier apparatus which has the following combination of desirable features: (1) carries antlers when they are not in use; (2) can carry antlers on one's person when they are not in use so that the antlers do not knock against each other when a sound is not wanted and so that the

hunter can rapidly access the antlers when use of the antlers is intended; (3) enables a hunter to climb a tree in order to sit in a tree stand without having antlers knock together; (4) permits game calls to be supported so that the game calls do not knock together when they are not in use; and (5) prevents game calls from interfering with a hunter properly aiming a bow and arrow. The foregoing desired characteristics are provided by the unique belt-worn article carrier apparatus of the present invention as will be made apparent from the following description thereof. Other advantages of the present invention over the prior art also will be rendered evident.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

To achieve the foregoing and other advantages, the present invention, briefly described, provides a belt-worn article carrier apparatus which includes an elastic cord assembly which includes a first cord end, a second cord end, and an intermediate cord portion between the first cord end and the second cord end. A waist belt assembly includes an adjustable belt portion, a first buckle portion attached to a first end of the adjustable belt portion, a second buckle portion attached to a second end of the adjustable belt portion, and a cord-reception wall attached to the adjustable belt portion. The cord-reception wall and the adjustable belt portion define a cord-reception channel. First article attachment means are provided for attaching a first article to the first cord end, and second article attachment means are provided for attaching a second article to the second cord end.

When the belt-worn article carrier apparatus of the invention is worn on a person, the first article is positioned on one side of the person near one hip, and the second article is positioned on the other side of the person near the other hip. Then, the person can grasp the first article and the second article simultaneously and pull the first article and the second article forward together, against the elastic bias of the elastic cord assembly, to be able to contact the first article and the second article together. When the respective articles are antlers, the elastic cord permits the first antler and the second antler to be rattled together with a full range of motion.

When contact between the first article and the second article is no longer needed, the person allows the elastic bias of the elastic cord assembly to pull the first article and the second article back to the respective sides of the person.

Preferably, the adjustable belt portion includes a first adjustable belt portion located at a first end of the adjustable belt portion, and a second adjustable belt portion located at a second end of the adjustable belt portion.

Preferably, the elastic cord assembly further includes a cord adjustment loop in the intermediate cord portion, and a cord adjustment lock is attached to the cord adjustment loop. The cord adjustment lock includes a clamping spring for clamping the cord adjustment loop and includes a clamp release button for releasing clamping action of the clamping spring on the cord adjustment loop.

Preferably, the elastic cord assembly further includes the first article attachment means connected to the first cord end and includes the second article attachment means connected to the second cord end. Preferably, the first article attachment means and the second article attachment means include double-sided hook and loop fastener straps. Each of the double-sided hook and loop fastener straps includes hooks on one strap side and loops on the opposite strap side.

With a second embodiment of the invention, the first article attachment means include a first article attachment loop; and the second article attachment means include a second article attachment loop. The cord-reception wall

includes first grommets which receive the first cord end and the second cord end.

In addition, an auxiliary elastic cord assembly includes a first auxiliary cord end, a second auxiliary cord end, and an intermediate auxiliary cord portion between the first auxiliary cord end and the second auxiliary cord end. First auxiliary article attachment means are provided for attaching a third article to the first auxiliary cord end, and second auxiliary article attachment means are provided for attaching a fourth article to the second auxiliary cord end.

The third article can be a first call unit, and the fourth article can be a second call unit.

Preferably, the first auxiliary article attachment means include a third article attachment loop, and the second auxiliary article attachment means include a fourth article attachment loop. The cord-reception wall includes auxiliary grommets for receiving the first auxiliary cord end and the second auxiliary cord end.

The above brief description sets forth rather broadly the more important features of the present invention in order that the detailed description thereof that follows may be better understood, and in order that the present contributions to the art may be better appreciated. There are, of course,

additional features of the invention that will be described hereinafter and which will be for the subject matter of the claims appended hereto.

In this respect, before explaining at least two preferred embodiments of the invention in detail, it is understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of the construction and to the arrangements of the components set forth in the following description or illustrated in the drawings. The invention is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced and carried out in various ways. Also, it is to be understood, that the phraseology and terminology employed herein are for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting.

As such, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the conception, upon which disclosure is based, may readily be utilized as a basis for designing other structures, methods, and systems for carrying out the several purposes of the present invention. It is important, therefore, that the claims be regarded as including such equivalent constructions insofar as they do not depart from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a new and improved belt-worn article carrier apparatus which has all of the advantages of the prior art and none of the disadvantages.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a new and improved belt-worn article carrier apparatus which may be easily and efficiently manufactured and marketed.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a new and improved belt-worn article carrier apparatus which is of durable and reliable construction.

An even further object of the present invention is to provide a new and improved belt-worn article carrier apparatus which is susceptible of a low cost of manufacture with regard to both materials and labor, and which accordingly is then susceptible of low prices of sale to the consuming public, thereby making such belt-worn article carrier apparatus available to the buying public.

Still yet a further object of the present invention is to provide a new and improved belt-worn article carrier apparatus which carries antlers when they are not in use.

Still another object of the present invention is to provide a new and improved belt-worn article carrier apparatus that can carry antlers on one's person when they are not in use so that the antlers do not knock against each other when a sound is not wanted and so that the hunter can rapidly access the antlers when use of the antlers is intended.

Yet another object of the present invention is to provide a new and improved belt-worn article carrier apparatus which enables a hunter to climb a tree in order to sit in a tree stand without having antlers knock together.

Even another object of the present invention is to provide a new and improved belt-worn article carrier apparatus that permits game calls to be supported so that the game calls do not knock together when they are not in use.

Still a further object of the present invention is to provide a new and improved belt-worn article carrier apparatus which prevents game calls from interfering with a hunter properly aiming a bow and arrow.

These together with still other objects of the invention, along with the various features of novelty which characterize the invention, are pointed out with particularity in the claims annexed to and forming a part of this disclosure. For a better understanding of the invention, its operating advantages and the specific objects attained by its uses, reference should be had to the accompanying drawings and descriptive matter in which there are illustrated preferred embodiments of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention will be better understood and the above objects as well as objects other than those set forth above will become more apparent after a study of the following detailed description thereof. Such description makes reference to the annexed drawing wherein:

Figure 1 is a front view showing a first embodiment of the belt-worn article carrier apparatus of the invention, being worn around the waist of a person and retaining two antlers.

Figure 2 is a rear view of the embodiment of the belt-worn article carrier apparatus shown in Figure 1.

Figure 3 is a rear view of the embodiment of the belt-worn article carrier apparatus of Figure 2 removed from the person and opened up to lie flat.

Figure 4 is an enlarged edge view of the portion of the embodiment of the invention shown in Figure 3 taken along line 4-4 thereof.

Figure 5 is an enlarged view of the portion of the embodiment of the invention shown in Figure 3 inside circled region 5 thereof.

Figure 6 is an enlarged view of the portion of the embodiment of the invention shown in Figure 3 inside circled region 6 thereof, wherein the article retention strap is open.

Figure 7 is a front view showing a second embodiment of the belt-worn article carrier apparatus of the invention, being worn around the waist of a person and retaining two antlers and two call units.

Figure 8 is a rear view of the embodiment of the belt-worn article carrier apparatus shown in Figure 7.

Figure 9 is a rear view of the embodiment of the belt-worn article carrier apparatus of Figure 7 removed from the person and opened up to lie flat.

Figure 10 an enlarged cross-sectional view of the embodiment of the invention in Figure 9 taken along line 10-10 thereof.

Figure 11 is an enlarged front view of the portion of the embodiment of the invention in Figure 9 that is contained in circled region 11 thereof.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

With reference to the drawings, a new and improved belt-worn article carrier apparatus embodying the principles and concepts of the present invention will be described.

Turning to Figures 1-6, there is shown a first embodiment of the belt-worn article carrier apparatus of the invention generally designated by reference numeral 10. In the preferred embodiment, belt-worn article carrier apparatus 10 includes an elastic cord assembly which includes a first cord end 14, a second cord end 16, and an intermediate cord portion 18 between the first cord end 14 and the second cord end 16. A waist belt assembly includes an adjustable belt portion 28, a first buckle portion 32 attached to a first end of the adjustable belt portion 28, a second buckle portion 34 attached to a second end of the adjustable belt portion 28, and a cord-reception wall 30 attached to the adjustable belt portion 28. The cord-reception wall 30 and the adjustable belt portion 28 define a cord-reception channel. First article attachment means are provided for attaching a first article to the first cord end 14, and second article attachment means are provided for attaching a second article to the second cord end 16. When the belt-worn article carrier apparatus 10 of the invention is worn on a person, the first article is positioned on one side of the person near one hip, and the second article is positioned on the other side of the person near the other hip. Then, the person can grasp the first article and the second article simultaneously and pull the first article and the second article forward together,

against the elastic bias of the elastic cord assembly, to be able to contact the first article and the second article together. When the respective articles are antlers, the elastic cord permits the first antler 11 and the second antler 13 to be rattled together with a full range of motion. When contact between the first article and the second article is no longer needed, the person allows the elastic bias of the elastic cord assembly to pull the first article and the second article back to the respective sides of the person.

Preferably, the adjustable belt portion 28 includes a first adjustable belt portion 36 located at a first end of the adjustable belt portion 28, and a second adjustable belt portion 38 located at a second end of the adjustable belt portion 28.

Preferably, the elastic cord assembly further includes a cord adjustment loop 22 in the intermediate cord portion 18, and a cord adjustment lock 24 is attached to the cord adjustment loop 22. The cord adjustment lock 24 includes a clamping spring 40 for clamping the cord adjustment loop 22 and includes a clamp release button 42 for releasing clamping action of the clamping spring 40 on the cord adjustment loop 22.

Preferably, the elastic cord assembly further includes the first article attachment means connected to the first cord end 14 and includes the second article attachment means connected to the second cord end 16. Preferably, the first article attachment means and the second article attachment means include

double-sided hook and loop fastener straps 26. Each of the double-sided hook and loop fastener straps 26 includes hooks on one strap side and loops on the opposite strap side. The double-sided hook and loop fastener straps 26 can be comprised of well known VELCRO(TM) material.

Preferably, the first article is a first antler 11, and the second article is a second antler 13. A designation that is contemplated for an apparatus of the invention which is used for carrying a pair of antlers is "Horn Holster".

More specifically, to use the belt-worn article carrier apparatus 10 as a Horn Holster illustrated in the drawings, the apparatus is used to carry a first antler 11 and a second antler 13. When the apparatus is worn on the person's waist as shown in Figures 1 and 2, the first antler 11 rests on one side of the person, and the second antler 13 rests on the other side of the person. In this way, the first antler 11 and the second antler 13 do not contact each other and do not make noise when they are carried by the person.

When the person desires to use the antlers to make noise to attract game, the person simply grasps the first antler 11 with one hand, grasps the second antler 13 with the other hand, and pulls the two antlers together, overcoming the elastic bias of the elastic cord assembly. When the antlers are knocked together, they make noise to attract game. When the person no longer desires to make noise with the antlers, the person simply ceases overcoming the elastic bias of the elastic cord assembly and permits the elastic cord assembly to pull back on

the first antler 11 and the second antler 13, allowing the elastic bias of the elastic cord assembly to pull the first antler 11 and the second antler 13 back to the respective sides of the person.

As stated above, the elastic cord assembly can include the double-sided hook and loop fastener straps 26 attached to the first cord end 14 and the second cord end 16. With such an embodiment, to attach the elastic cord assembly to the waist belt assembly, one of the double-sided hook and loop fastener straps 26 is threaded through a first portion of the cord-reception channel under a first cord-reception wall 30 and is positioned on a first side of the cord adjustment loop 22, and the other of the double-sided hook and loop fastener straps 26 is threaded through a second portion of the cord-reception channel under a second cord-reception wall 30 and is positioned on a second side of the cord adjustment loop 22.

To attach a respective antler to a respective double-sided hook and loop fastener strap 26, the respective double-sided hook and loop fastener strap 26 is first opened, as shown in Figure 6. The end of the respective antler is placed against the open double-sided hook and loop fastener strap 26, and then the strap 26 is wound around end of the antler. When this is done, the one side of the double-sided hook and loop fastener strap 26 engages the other side of the double-sided hook and loop fastener strap 26 to provide a secure closure of the double-sided hook and loop fastener strap 26 around the end of the antler, as shown in Figures 1 and 2. With the waist belt assembly secured around the

waist of the person, once the first antler 11 and the second antler 13 are attached to the double-sided hook and loop fastener straps 26, the cord adjustment loop 22 can be pulled to assure that the first antler 11 and the second antler 13 rest at the sides of the person.

Preferably, the belt-worn article carrier apparatus 10 is adjustable to be worn by a wide variety of persons has a wide variety of waist sizes. Preferably, the first adjustable belt portion 36 and the second adjustable belt portion 38 are adjusted independently of each other. Each of the first adjustable belt portion 36 and the second adjustable belt portion 38 operates in a conventional way in the manner of conventional adjustable length belts. Independent adjustment of the first adjustable belt portion 36 and the second adjustable belt portion 38 facilitates proper positioning of the first cord end 14 at one side of the person and the second cord end 16 at the other side of the person.

To provide for a longer intermediate cord portion 18, the clamp release button 42 of the cord adjustment lock 24 is pressed to release the clamping spring 40 from the cord adjustment loop 22. Then. A longer length of the intermediate cord portion 18 can be extended out toward the first cord end 14 and the second cord end 16, respectively. Then, the clamp release button 42 is let alone to lock the cord adjustment lock 24 onto the newly adjusted intermediate cord portion 18.

To provide for a shorter intermediate cord portion 18, the clamp release button 42 is pressed to release the clamping spring 40 from the cord adjustment loop 22. Then, the cord adjustment loop 22 is increased in size, thereby shortening the portions of the intermediate cord portion 18 which extend to the first cord end 14 and the second cord end 16. Then, the clamp release button 42 is let alone to lock the cord adjustment lock 24 onto the newly adjusted intermediate cord portion 18.

Once the belt-worn article carrier apparatus 10 is adjusted for a particular person, the apparatus can be easily worn by the person by simply placing the apparatus around the person's waist and simply locking the second buckle portion 34 into the first buckle portion 32. The apparatus can be simply removed from the person, while still retaining its respective adjustments, by simply disengaging the second buckle portion 34 from the first buckle portion 32 and removing the apparatus from the person.

Although dimensions of the belt-worn article carrier apparatus 10 of the invention can be determined as desired, the following specific dimensions are suitable. The waist belt assembly can includes a nylon strap that is 54 inches long and 2 inches wide. Two 8 inch wide loops can be sewn onto the waist belt assembly, one on each side of the centerline of the belt assembly, spaced respectively about 2 inches apart from each other along the longitudinal axis of the belt assembly. The cord-reception walls 30 are formed from such loops. Preferably, therefore, there is a transverse gap (of about 2 inches) between the

two cord-reception walls 30. The elastic cord can be made from elastic shock cord which can be about 26 inches long and 3/16 inch in diameter. In this respect, the belt-worn article carrier apparatus 10 of the invention can be used with persons having waistlines measuring from about 34 to about 48 inches.

The first buckle portion 32 and the second buckle portion 34 can be made from plastic.

The Horn Holster apparatus allows a person to quietly carry the antlers to and from a stand, still hunting, and also, while climbing a tree, and to conveniently use the antlers when desired.

Turning to Figures 7-11, a second embodiment 66 of the invention is shown. Reference numerals are shown that correspond to like reference numerals that designate like elements shown in the other figures. In addition, the first article attachment means include a first article attachment loop 48; and the second article attachment means include a second article attachment loop 50. The cord-reception wall 30 includes first grommets 62 which receive the first cord end 14 and the second cord end 16.

In addition, an auxiliary elastic cord assembly includes a first auxiliary cord end 44, a second auxiliary cord end 46, and an intermediate auxiliary cord portion 60 between the first auxiliary cord end 44 and the second auxiliary cord end 46. First auxiliary article attachment means are provided for attaching a

third article to the first auxiliary cord end 44, and second auxiliary article attachment means are provided for attaching a fourth article to the second auxiliary cord end 46. The third article can be a first call unit 56, and the fourth article can be a second call unit 58.

Preferably, the first auxiliary article attachment means include a third article attachment loop 52, and the second auxiliary article attachment means include a fourth article attachment loop 54. The cord-reception wall 30 includes auxiliary grommets 64 for receiving the first auxiliary cord end 44 and the second auxiliary cord end 46.

With respect to the first antler 11 and the second antler 13, operation of the second embodiment of the invention 66 is substantially the same as the operation of the first embodiment of the invention 10. In addition, the first call unit 56 and the second call unit 58 are at-the-ready and easily grasped when they are to be used. In this respect, the first call unit 56 and the second call unit 58 can be pulled away from the belt-worn article carrier apparatus against the bias of the auxiliary elastic cord assembly, can be used, and can be returned to the belt-worn article carrier apparatus when the bias of the auxiliary elastic cord assembly pulls the first call unit 56 and the second call unit 58 back to the belt-worn article carrier apparatus.

Generally, almost any hunting accessory can be supported by the first article attachment means, the second article attachment means, the first auxiliary

article attachment means, and the second auxiliary article attachment means. For example, the first call unit 56 and the second call unit 58 can be deer calls or any other desired game call. Also, for example, elk hunters can attach a single bugle tube and a couple of cow calls. Water foul hunters can attach multiple duck and goose calls instead of the antlers. Turkey hunters can attach a slate, a striker, and a couple of shock calls. Also, hunters using a muzzleloader can attach quick loads and a mini ram rod.

The belt-worn article carrier apparatus of the invention illustrated by the embodiment of Figures 7-11 can be designated: CALL MASTER.

The components of the belt-worn article carrier apparatus of the invention can be made from inexpensive and durable cloth, plastic and metal materials.

As to the manner of usage and operation of the instant invention, the same is apparent from the above disclosure, and accordingly, no further discussion relative to the manner of usage and operation need be provided.

It is apparent from the above that the present invention accomplishes all of the objects set forth by providing a new and improved belt-worn article carrier apparatus that is low in cost, relatively simple in design and operation, and which may advantageously be used to carry antlers when they are not in use. With the invention, a belt-worn article carrier apparatus is provided which can carry antlers on one's person when they are not in use so that the antlers do

not knock against each other when a sound is not wanted and so that the hunter can rapidly access the antlers when use of the antlers is intended. With the invention, a belt-worn article carrier apparatus is provided which enables a hunter to climb a tree in order to sit in a tree stand without having antlers knock together. With the invention, a belt-worn article carrier apparatus is provided which permits game calls to be supported so that the game calls do not knock together when they are not in use. With the invention, a belt-worn article carrier apparatus is provided which prevents game calls from interfering with a hunter properly aiming a bow and arrow.

Thus, while the present invention has been shown in the drawings and fully described above with particularity and detail in connection with what is presently deemed to be the most practical and preferred embodiment(s) of the invention, it will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art that many modifications thereof may be made without departing from the principles and concepts set forth herein, including, but not limited to, variations in size, materials, shape, form, function and manner of operation, assembly and use.

Hence, the proper scope of the present invention should be determined only by the broadest interpretation of the appended claims so as to encompass all such modifications as well as all relationships equivalent to those illustrated in the drawings and described in the specification.

Finally, it will be appreciated that the purpose of the annexed **Abstract** is to enable the U. S. Patent and Trademark Office and the public generally, and especially the scientists, engineers and practitioners in the art who are not familiar with patent or legal terms or phraseology, to determine quickly from a cursory inspection the nature and essence of the technical disclosure of the application. Accordingly, the **Abstract** is neither intended to define the invention or the application, which only is measured by the claims, nor is it intended to be limiting as to the scope of the invention in any way.